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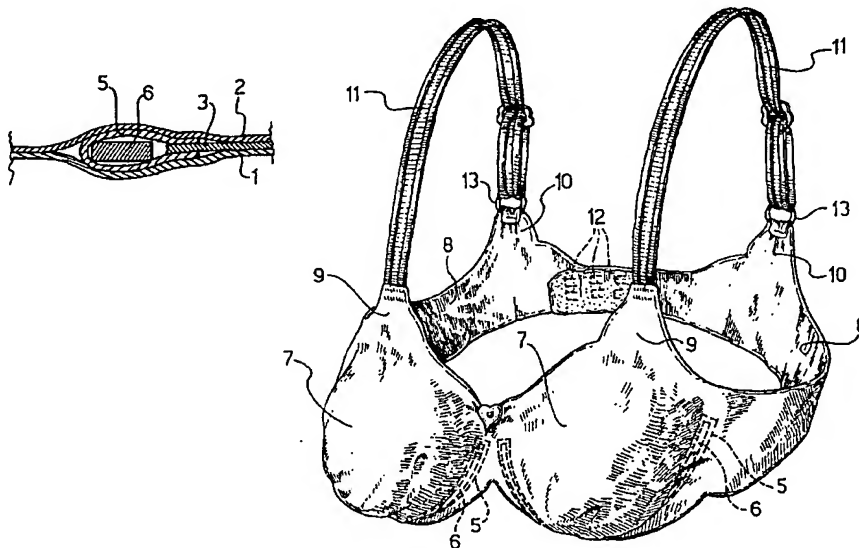
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ning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: **STIFFENED BRASSIERE**



(57) Abstract: A stiffened brassiere is made using at least two superimposed layers of fabric (1, 2) between which stiffening elements (6) are inserted; the two layers of fabric (1, 2) are joined together by means of adhesive bonding and are then shaped so as to form the cups and the side bands of the brassiere. This stiffened brassiere is more comfortable than the stiffened brassieres of the prior art.

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DESCRIPTION

"Stiffened brassiere"

The present invention relates to a stiffened brassiere.

5 As is known, brassieres comprise two cups which are joined together, two side bands which extend out from the cups and are adapted to be fastened to one another, and two shoulder straps, each of which is attached at one end to one of the cups and at the other to the corresponding
10 side band. Certain types of brassieres are strapless.

These brassieres are usually made from pieces of fabric which are stitched together in some suitable way to produce the abovementioned structure.

A stiffened brassiere has stiffening elements which
15 are generally positioned along the bottom part of the cup so as to provide a high degree of support for the bust. These stiffening elements usually consist of two curved wires housed in tubular fabric casings which are sewn onto the inside of the brassiere.

20 Unfortunately, stiffened brassieres are not very comfortable to wear.

This is because, in addition to the discomfort caused by the seams joining together the pieces of fabric - which are also present in brassieres without
25 underwiring or "soft" brassieres - there is the added

discomfort of the underwires and their casings.

The seams joining together the pieces of fabric can be uncomfortable because they form irregularities on the brassiere's surface which can cause irritation when they
5 come into contact with the skin, especially when you consider the relative movements that take place between the brassiere and the skin.

The underwires are even more uncomfortable precisely because they are rigid elements which press against the
10 skin through the casings. Moreover, the fact that the casings with the underwires protrude wholly towards the inside of the brassiere just exacerbates the situation. The casing seams, like the other seams, constitute a further source of discomfort.

15 It should also be said that, over time, the seams are subject to wear and can therefore come undone, with the risk of the whole brassiere falling apart.

The object of the present invention is to provide a stiffened brassiere which is more comfortable than those
20 of the prior art.

This object is achieved by means of a stiffened brassiere comprising two cups which are joined together, two side bands which extend out from the cups and can be fastened to one another, and stiffening means which
25 reinforce the structure of the brassiere, characterized

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in that it is made using at least two superimposed layers of fabric between which the stiffening means are inserted, the two layers of fabric being joined together by means of adhesive bonding and being shaped so as to
5 form the cups and the side bands.

In order to gain a better understanding of the invention, a description is given below of a non-limiting exemplary embodiment thereof, which is illustrated in the appended drawings, in which:

10 Figs 1, 2, 3, 4 show perspective views of the consecutive stages of production of a brassiere according to the invention;

Fig. 5 is a cross section on the plane V-V of a detail of the brassiere structure shown in Fig. 4;

15 Fig. 6 shows the bra according to the invention in its final configuration.

With reference to Fig. 1, the latter shows an exploded view of some of the components of the brassiere according to the invention.

20 Two layers of fabric 1, 2 of the same shape and having a certain degree of elasticity, fitted to be superimposed, are provided.

A third layer of fabric 3 is also provided, which is smaller and less elastic than the layers of fabric 1, 2.
25 The layer of fabric 3 has two adjacent curved edges 4

- 4 -

along which two corresponding curved tubular casings 5 are stitched. A corresponding curved wire 6 with a flattened cross section is inserted into each casing 5 and the ends of the casing are then sewn shut so as to
5 enclose the wire in the casing.

The three layers of fabric 1, 2, 3 are placed one on top of the other and are joined together by means of adhesive bonding, inserting the layer of fabric 3, with the casings 5 and the wires 6, between the layers of
10 fabric 1, 2 as shown in the sequence of Figs 1 and 2. This joining by means of adhesive bonding can involve gluing, for example using a thermoadhesive resin which is spread in a suitable manner onto the surfaces of the layers of fabric 1, 2, 3 which need to be joined
15 together. The adhesively bonded joint can also, as long as suitable fabrics have been selected, be made by heat-bonding or heat-fusing the fabric fibres, or by using other similar systems.

At this point, as shown in Fig. 3, the brassiere
20 structure thus formed is pre-shaped using heat in order to produce two cups 7 in the region of the casings 5 containing the wires 6.

As may be seen in Fig. 4, the bra structure with the pre-shaped cups 7 is then cut out so as to produce the
25 final brassiere shape with side bands 8 and with the

- 5 -

areas around the cups 7 following the line of the cups themselves. These areas around the cups 7 extend to form two extension pieces 9 on the side opposite the side with the wires 6. Two extension pieces 10 also extend from the
5 free ends of the side bands 8, on the same side as the extension pieces 9.

The brassiere structure shown in Fig. 4 is completed by attaching shoulder straps to the extension pieces 9 and 10 and by applying fastening elements to the ends of
10 the side bands 8 so as to give the finished brassiere shown in Fig. 6, where the shoulder straps are denoted by the reference 11 and the fastening elements by the reference 12. The shoulder straps 11 are attached to the extension pieces 10 by means of rings 13. The fastening
15 elements consist of eyes attached to one of the two side bands 8 and of corresponding hooks attached to the other side band of the brassiere. The wires 6 are positioned along the bottom part of the cup so as to provide a high degree of support for the bust.

20 Although the brassiere in Fig. 6 is a stiffened brassiere since it is fitted with the wires 6, it is still comfortable.

First and foremost, there are no external seams and so irritation to the skin is avoided. The only seams
25 present - those on the casings 5 containing the wires 6 -

- 6 -

are enclosed between the two layers of fabric 1, 2 and so do not come into contact with the skin.

With reference to Fig. 5, the fact that the casings 5 containing the wires 6 are compressed between the two layers of fabric 1, 2 means that their thickness is reduced and, in addition, that they protrude towards the outside as well as towards the inside of the brassiere. All these features make the brassiere more comfortable than those of the prior art as mentioned in the introduction, in which the casings containing the wires are not compressed and so protrude towards the inside.

The flattened shape of the wires 6 reduces the extent to which they protrude and so makes an appreciable contribution to increasing comfort.

The fact that the only seams - those of the casings 5 - are enclosed between the two layers of fabric 1, 2 allows them to be protected against wear.

It should also be added that since the casings 5 are narrow and enclosed between the two layers of fabric 1, 2, they do not need to be secured to the layer of fabric 3 by strong seams. Furthermore, the wires 6 are securely enclosed within the casings 5 and the two superimposed layers of fabric 1, 2, so that there is no way that they can come out.

In order to attach the shoulder straps 11 to the

- 7 -

cups 7 and the fastening elements 12 to the side bands 8, seams can be made which, although external, are extremely unobtrusive. Alternatively, if it is desired not to use seams at all in these finishing operations, other
5 attachment and closure systems - for example heat-bonding systems - can be used.

Thanks to the elasticity of the two layers of fabric 1, 2, there is no need to use elastic tape along the edges of the brassiere.

10 The brassiere of Fig. 6 is also very pleasing from the aesthetic viewpoint, given that there are no seams or elastic tapes; this gives the effect of the brassiere being in a single piece.

It is of course possible to make variations and/or
15 additions to the embodiment described and illustrated.

It would be possible to do without the intermediate layer of fabric 3 and the casings 5 sewn to it, positioning the wires 6 directly between the two layers of fabric 1, 2. However, the solution illustrated is
20 effective to assemble; moreover, the intermediate layer of fabric 3 reinforces the central part of the brassiere.

The wires can have a different cross section from the one illustrated, although a flattened cross section of the wires is, as seen above, advantageous.

25 Said wires could be replaced with other similar

stiffening elements. Another possibility would also be to insert silicone material into the casings, which would also act as a stiffening element.

In general the stiffening elements can be of any
5 shape and size, they can vary in number and can be placed in any suitable position in the brassiere, depending on the various technical reinforcing requirements.

The general shape of the brassiere can be varied to meet different aesthetic and/or functional requirements.

10 The brassiere can also be a strapless brassiere.

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CLAIMS

1. Stiffened brassiere comprising two cups (7) which are joined together, two side bands (8) which extend out from the cups (7) and are adapted be fastened
5 to one another, and stiffening means (6) which reinforce the structure of the brassiere, characterized in that it is made using at least two superimposed layers of fabric (1, 2) between which the stiffening means (6) are inserted, the two layers of fabric (1, 2) being joined
10 together by means of adhesive bonding and being shaped so as to form the cups (7) and the side bands (8).

2. Brassiere according to Claim 1, in which a third layer of fabric (3) is inserted between the first two layers of fabric (1, 2) and to which the stiffening
15 means (6) are secured.

3. Brassiere according to Claim 2, in which casings (5) in which the stiffening means (6) are housed, are sewn onto the third layer of fabric (3).

4. Brassiere according to Claim 3, in which the
20 third layer of fabric has two edges (4) in the shape of an arc of a circle, which are positioned along the bottom part of the cups (7) and along which the casings (5) are stitched.

5. Brassiere according to any one of the preceding
25 claims, in which the first two layers of fabric (1, 2)

- 10 -

are elastic.

6. Brassiere according to Claim 5 when dependent upon any one of Claims 2, 3, 4, in which the third layer of fabric (3) is less elastic than the first two layers
5 of fabric (1, 2).

7. Brassiere according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the stiffening means consist of wires
(6).

8. Brassiere according to Claim 7, in which the
10 wires (6) are curved and positioned along the bottom part of the cups (7).

9. Brassiere according to Claim 7 or 8, in which the wires (6) have a flattened cross section.

10. Brassiere according to Claim 3 or 4, in which
15 the stiffening means consist of silicone material inserted into the said casings.

11. Brassiere according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the layers of fabric are joined together by means of gluing.

20 12. Brassiere according to any one of Claims 1 to 10, in which the layers of fabric are joined together by means of heat-bonding.

13. Brassiere according to any one of the preceding claims, additionally comprising two shoulder straps (11),
25 each of which is attached at one end to one of the cups

- 11 -

(7) and at the other end to the corresponding side band (8).

14. Process for manufacturing the brassiere according to any one of the preceding claims, comprising
5 the following stages:

- superimposing the layers of fabric and inserting the stiffening means (6) between them and joining the layers of fabric together by means of adhesive bonding;
- shaping the cups (7);
- 10 - cutting the layers of fabric so as to form the side bands (8) and to shape the area around the cups (7); and
- attaching fastening elements (12) to the side bands (8).

15 15. Process according to Claim 14 when dependent upon Claim 3 or 4, in which the casings (5) are sewn onto the third layer of fabric (3) and the stiffening means (6) are then inserted into the casings (5) before the stage of the superimposing of the layers of fabric.

20 16. Process according to Claim 14 when dependent upon Claim 13, in which, during the stage when the fastening elements (12) are attached to the side bands (8), the shoulder straps (11) are also attached to the cups (7) and to the side bands (8).

25 17. Process according to any one of Claims 14, 15, 16, in which the cups (7) are shaped by means of

thermoforming.

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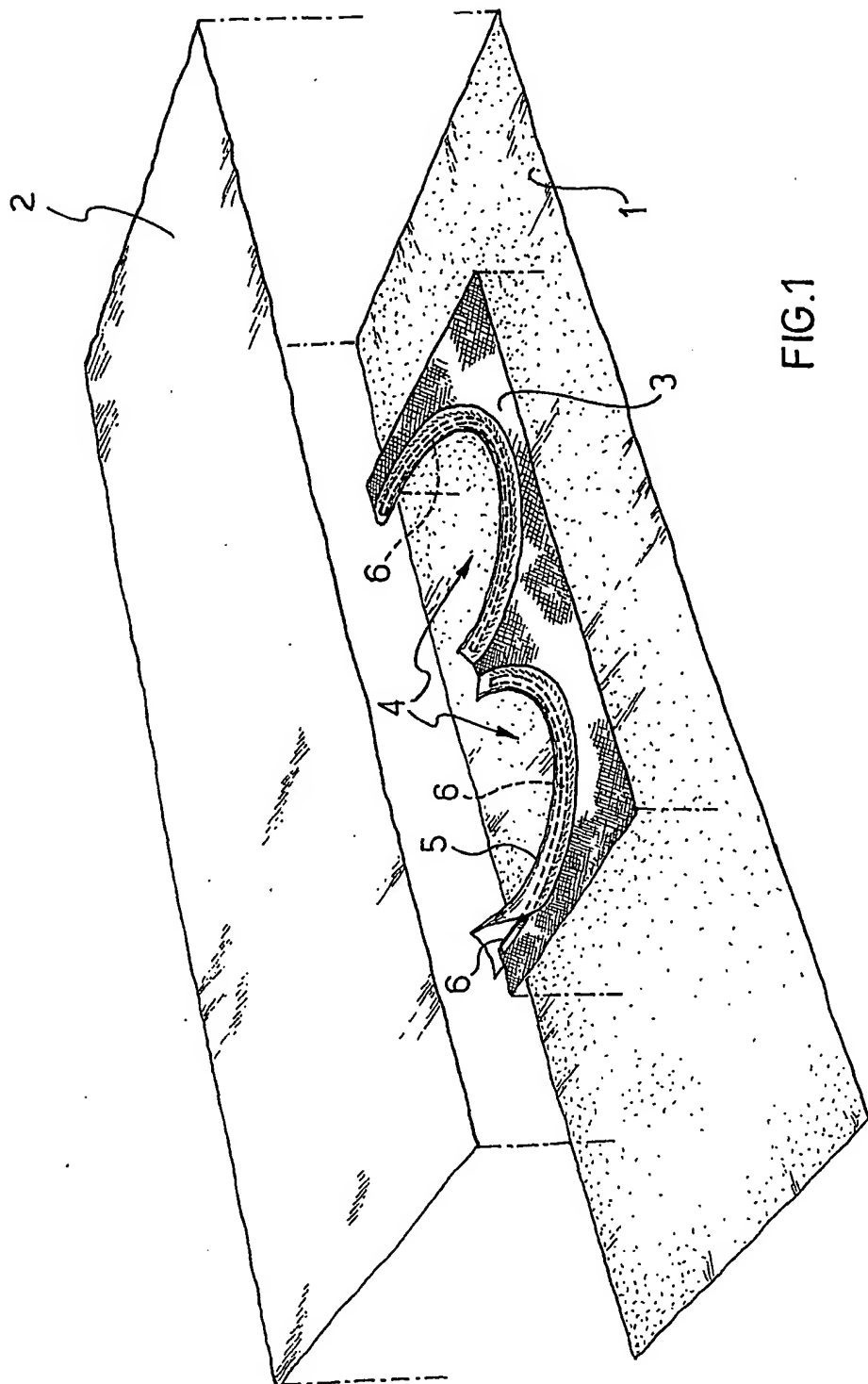


FIG.1

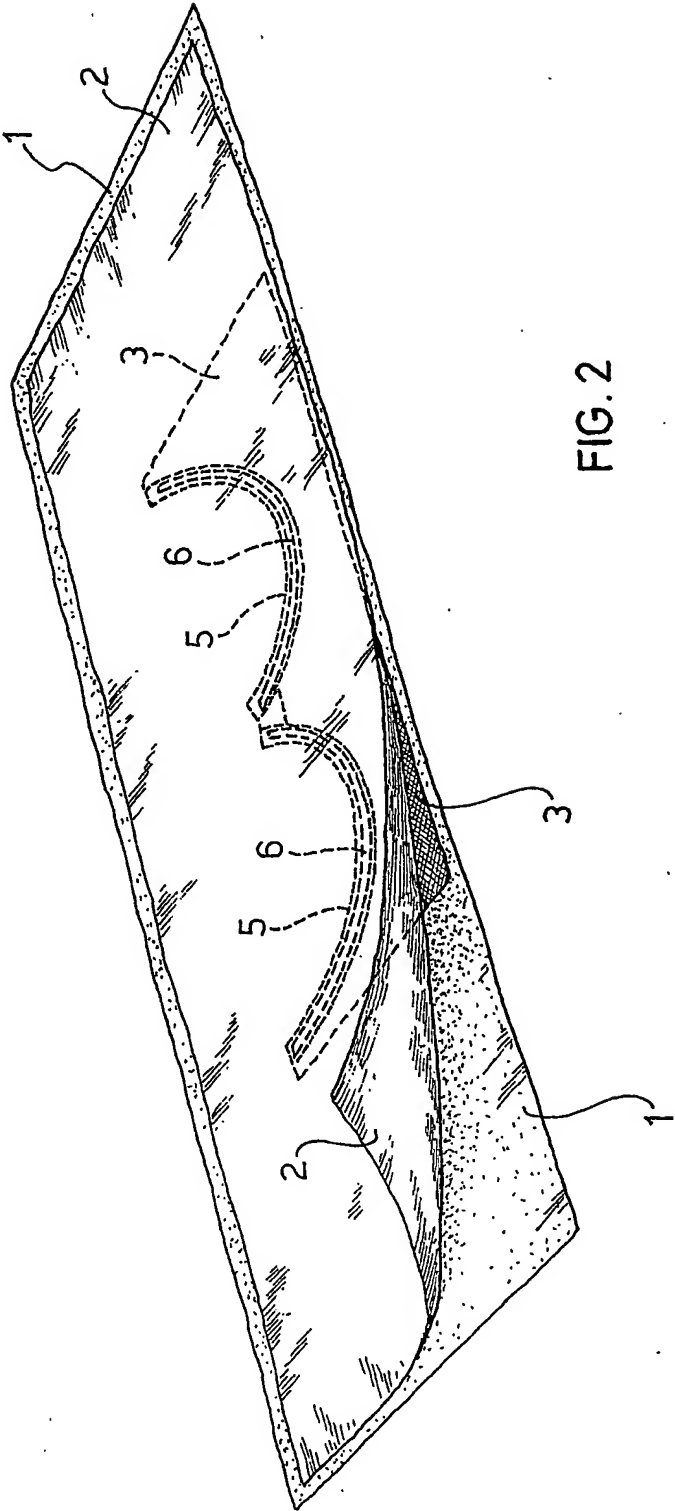


FIG. 2

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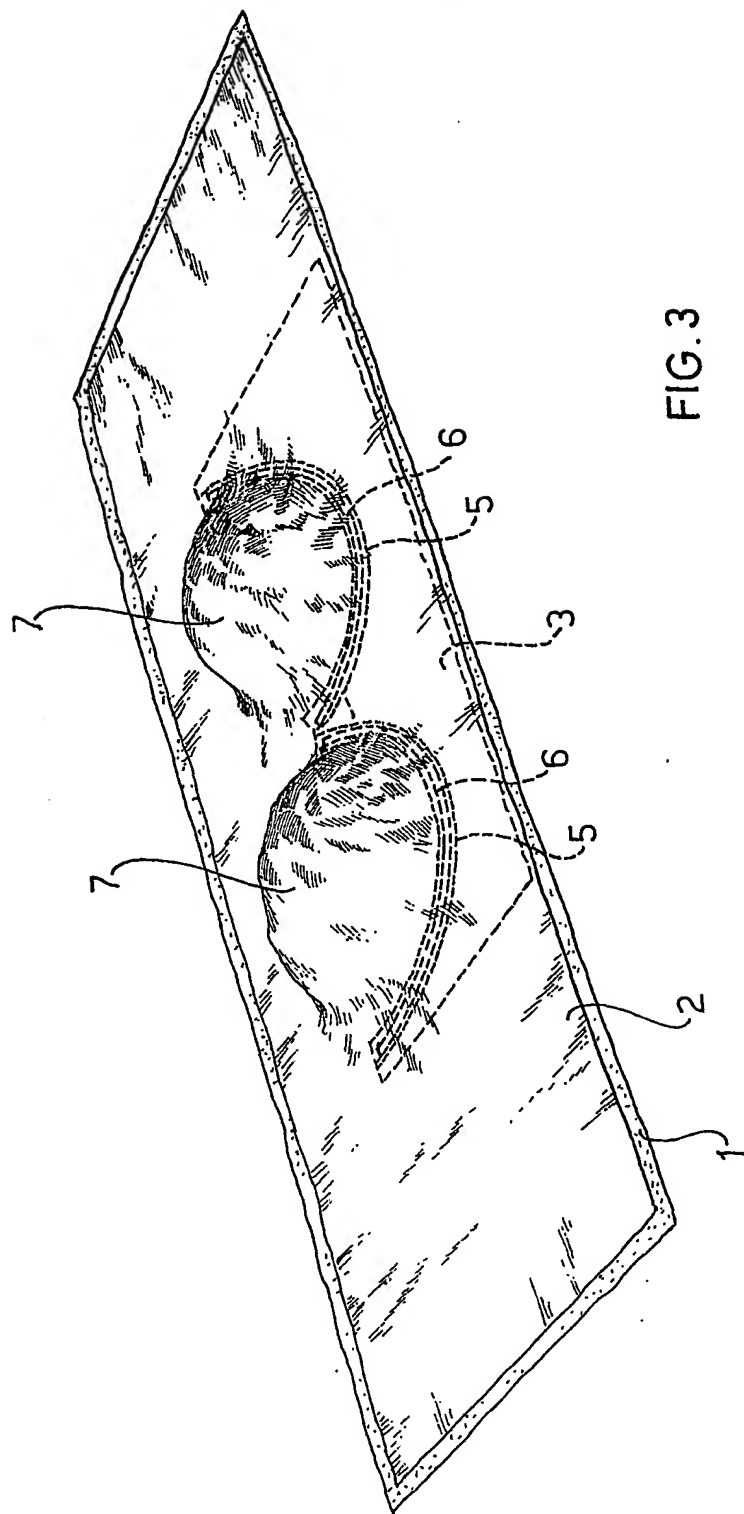


FIG. 3

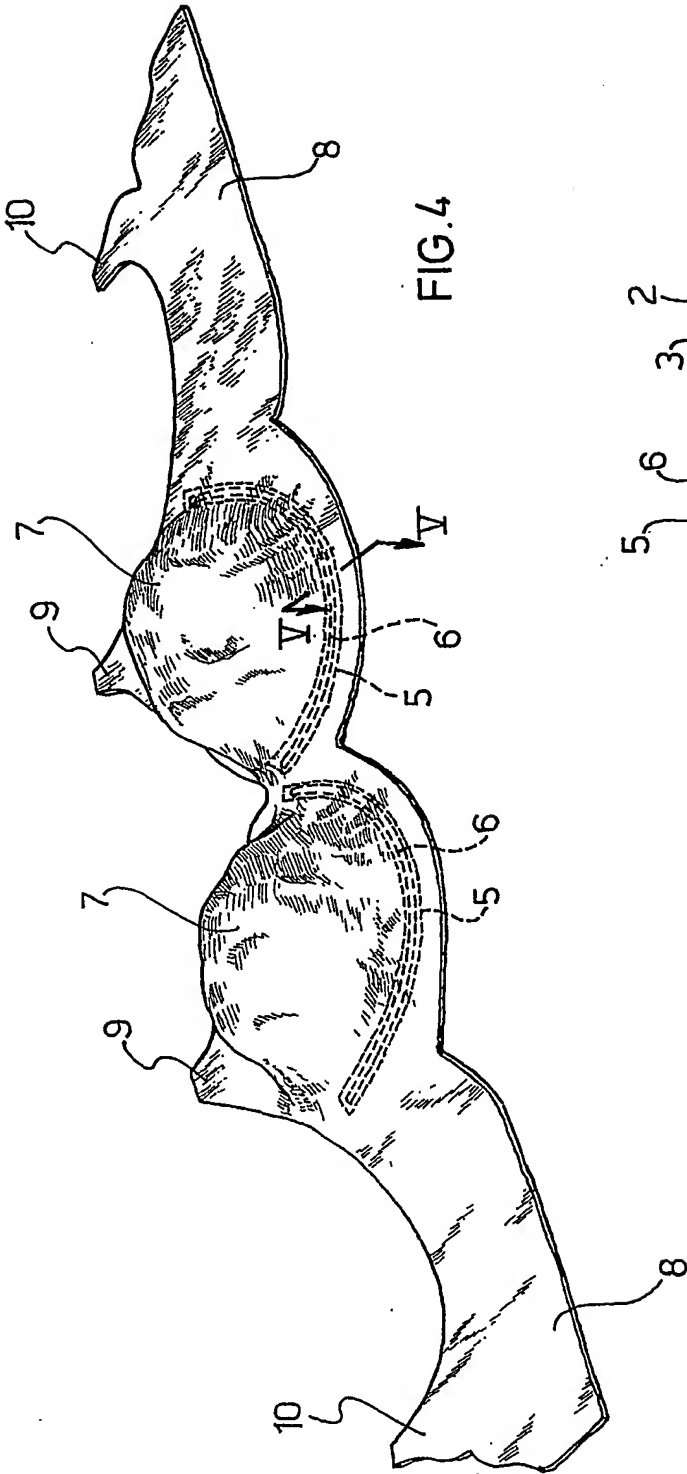


FIG. 4

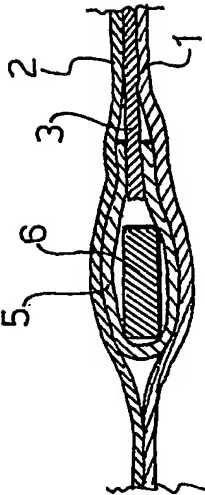


FIG. 5

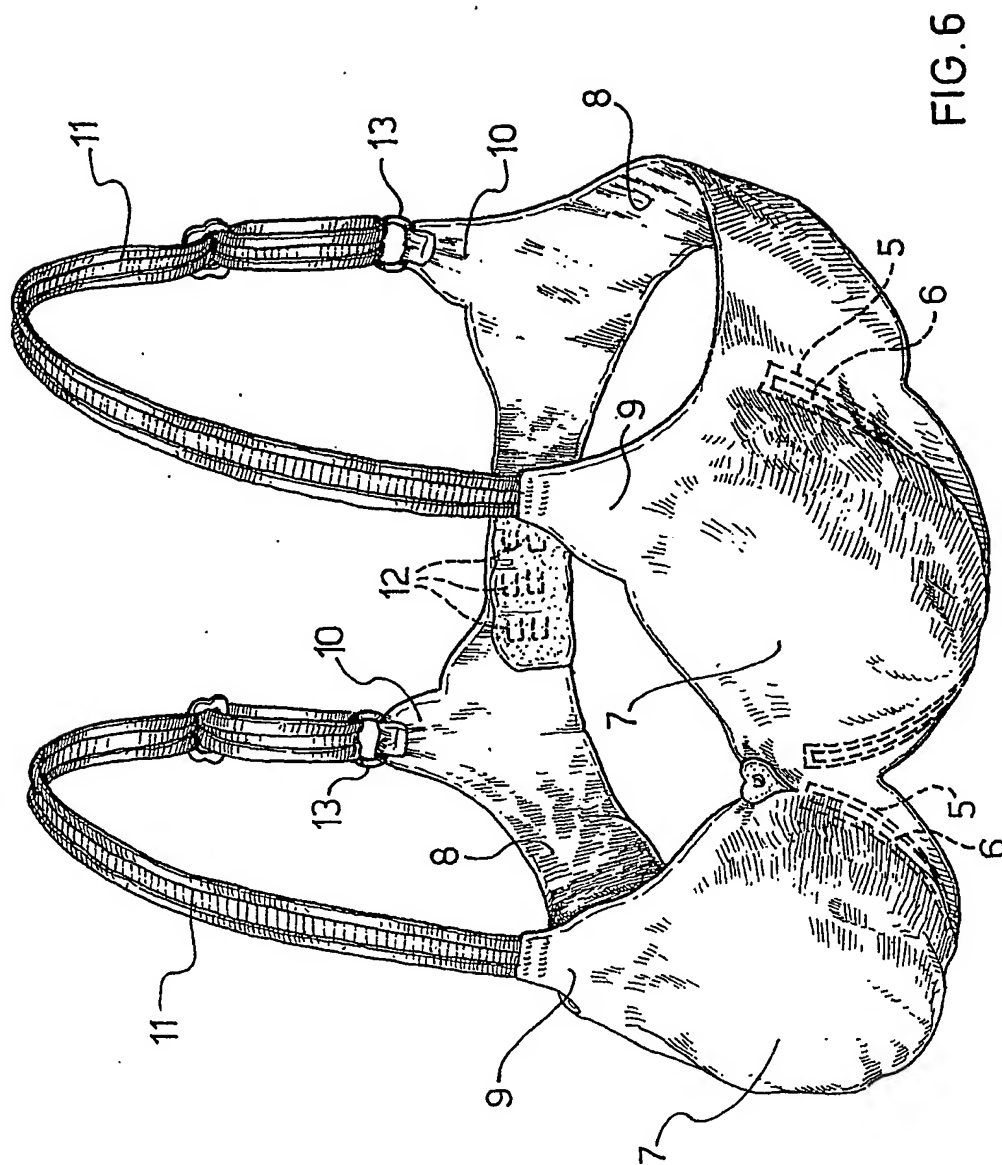


FIG. 6

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 A41C3/00 A41C5/00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 A41C

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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Information on patent family members

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